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HISTORY OF THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

BY HENRY MARTYN.

A HUNDRED and twenty-five thousand subscribers, and acknowledged earnestness of purpose and genuineness of achievement, were the remarkable and encouraging facts that greeted the first number of *The Century*.

It had taken eleven years of unremitting labor to achieve this result. Patient toil and masterly sagacity had been abundantly bestowed on the work. And *The Century*, freed from any influence but that of its projectors, was the outcome—a noble monument to the genius of two sturdy, upright New Englanders.

In 1868 Dr. J. G. Holland, after disposing of his interests in the Springfield Republican, paid a visit to Europe. It may be supposed that the offer of his publishers to take up the editorship of one of their periodicals raised serious questions in his mind, and that he had dwelt upon them largely. For when he fell in with the right man, in the course of his European travels, he gave utterance to his ideas. It is almost a romance, this story of Dr. Holland and Roswell Smith, in Geneva, standing on a bridge that spanned the Rhone, and there debating the means of starting an American magazine—a magazine the distinctive character of which should be its Americanism.

The result of this talk, which is fact not fable, was the establishment of Scribner's Monthly, with Dr. Holland as editor and Mr. Smith business manager—both now dead—and with them Mr. Drake as art superintendent and Mr. Gilder managing editor.

The times were out of joint with illustration work and American literature, and as a means to business success the long-headed management set about to improve the one and develop the other.

The experiment was costly, for experience as well as good work had to be purchased. It is interesting to note that predictions of failure, of which there were a plenty, were generally based on the idea that there was no room for another magazine. But the new venture soon showed that there was room, lots of it—at the top.

Scribner's Monthly commenced its career in 1870. A bold struggle after an ideal began. Again and again we find it asserted editorially that they were striving for an American magazine in the interests of the nation. By 1878 the circulation had reached one hundred thousand. It was decided that no serial stories from other than American pens should be published, and a couple of years later the story of the exclusion of foreign writers from the serial field was told editorially.



Drawn by Joseph Pennell.

From *The Century Magazine*.

"A CORNSTALK CABIN."

Eleven years from the birth of the magazine, business complications and the state of Dr. Holland's health led to the purchase of all the other interests by Mr. Roswell Smith and some of the younger men.

The change was effected by November, 1881, and a magazine appeared bearing that date, having the same business manager, the same editorial force, and the same art director as had Scribner's Monthly, but with the title "The Century Magazine." It had, also, the same subscription list that Scribner's Monthly had.

Thus it was that The Century started with one hundred and twenty-five thousand subscribers and a splendid reputation. Not a few were the wiseacres who said : "What ! Change your name ! That will kill it surely ! "

In announcing the "new series," as they preferred to call the newly named magazine, after recalling the achievements of the past—wood engraving lifted from mechanicalism to a fine art, and American work pushed to the foremost place ; American authorship developed and exploited, at home and abroad, in an unprecedented way, and a glorious national triumph inaugurated—the editor pledged the "new series" to fresh efforts for advancement, and promised to give prominence to popular studies of history, and to the elaborate discussion of practical questions as this field seemed to afford the very best of all magazine material.



Drawn by Sol Eytinge.

From Scribner's Monthly, December, 1870.

"THE TOOTH-POWDER MAN."



Drawn by Mary Hallock Foote.

From *The Century Magazine*, November, 1881

"NOON IN THE CORRIDOR, MEXICAN HOTEL."

The man to whom was due the foundation of the magazine and to whom largely it owed its high character was not permitted to direct the new series. Dr. Holland died a few days after the appearance of the first *Century*, and to

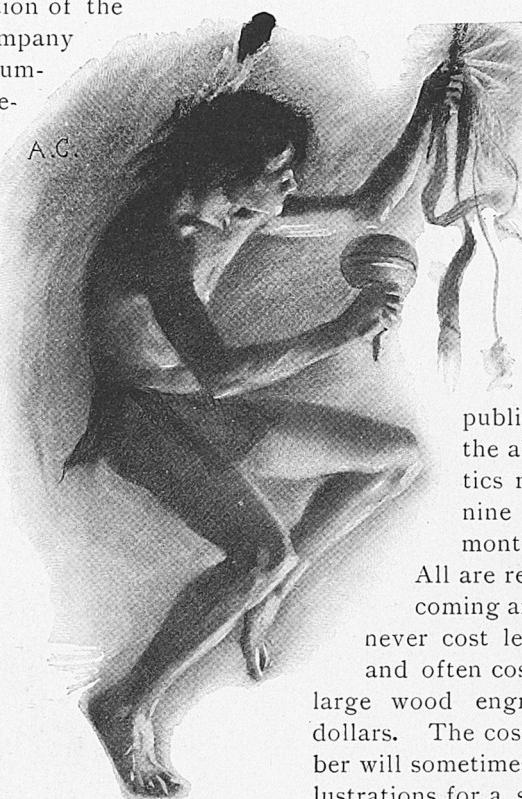
Richard Watson Gilder, the managing editor, was allotted the arduous privilege of conducting it.

The first new feature of the magazine was a frontispiece to every number. Scribner's Monthly had but sparingly indulged in them. In 1882 another novelty, that was to be generally copied, was adopted—that of printing the names of authors with their articles, instead of relegating them to the index, as heretofore.

The Century met with increasing success as the months passed on. In 1885 the circulation, announced editorially, was a quarter of a million; and latterly, during the publication of the American News Company times nearly that num-

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*Drawn by A. Castaigne.
From The Century Magazine.*

"STUDY OF INDIAN LIFE."

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lustrations for a series like Kennan's
cost twenty-five thousand dollars. In
lustrations for an issue rarely cost
dred dollars.

Much of The Century's fame has come from the able conduct of the art department under Mr. A. W. Drake and Mr. W. Lewis Fraser. The illustrations have been remarkable for their uniform excellence and the carefulness with which the printing has been done. The editorial policy under the presiding genius of Mr. Richard Watson Gilder needs no further comment.

Mr. Frank H. Scott is the president of the company, C. F. Chichester the treasurer, and W. W. Ellsworth secretary. Mr. R. U. Johnson is the associate editor and Mr. C. C. Buel the assistant editor. The last-named gentlemen were the special editors of the War Series. Mr. Drake is still superintendent of the art department, and Mr. Fraser is the art manager.